

Region 4
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Science and Ecosystem Support Division
Athens, Georgia

OPERATING PROCEDURE

Title: **Sample and Evidence Management**


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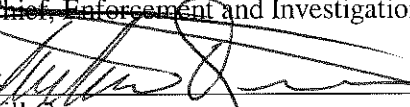
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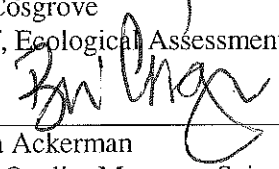
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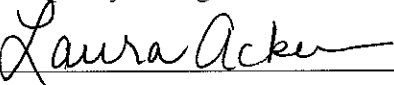
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Revision History

This table shows changes to this controlled document over time. The most recent version is presented in the top row of the table. Previous versions of the document are maintained by the SESD Field Quality Manager.

History	Effective Date
<p>SESDPROC-005-R1, <i>Sample and Evidence Management</i>, replaces SESDPROC-005-R0</p> <p>General Updated referenced procedures to reflect most recent version.</p> <p>Replaced “shall” with “will”.</p> <p>Cover Page: Changed title for Antonio Quinones from Environmental Investigation Branch to Enforcement and Investigations Branch. Changed Bill Cosgrove’s title from Acting Chief to Chief.</p> <p>Section 1.3 Updated information to reflect that procedure is located on the H: drive of the LAN.</p> <p>Section 1.4 Added reference for the SESD Operating Procedure for Control of Records. Alphabetized and revised the referencing style for consistency.</p> <p>Section 2.2.3 Added that Confidential Business Information will be handled in accordance with SESD Operating Procedure for Control of Records.</p>	November 1, 2007
SESDPROC-005-R0, Sample and Evidence Management, Original Issue	February 05, 2007

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1 General Information

1.1 Purpose

This document describes general and specific procedures, methods and considerations to be used and observed by SEDS field investigators when handling and managing samples and other types of evidence after their collection and during delivery to the laboratory.

1.2 Scope/Application

The procedures contained in this document are to be used by field investigators when handling and managing samples and other evidence collected to support SEDS field investigations. On the occasion that SEDS field investigators determine that any of the procedures described in this section are either inappropriate, inadequate or impractical and that another procedure must be used, the variant procedure will be documented in the field log book, along with a description of the circumstances requiring its use.

1.3 Documentation/Verification

This procedure was prepared by persons deemed technically competent by SEDS management, based on their knowledge, skills and abilities and have been tested in practice and reviewed in print by a subject matter expert. The official copy of this procedure resides on the H: drive of the SEDS local area network. The Field Quality Manager (FQM) is responsible for ensuring the most recent version of the procedure is placed on the H: drive and for maintaining records of review conducted prior to its issuance.

1.4 References

USEPA Region 4 Environmental Investigations Standard Operating Procedures and Quality Assurance Manual (EISOPQAM), November 2001

SEDS Operating Procedure for Control of Records, SEDSPROC-002, Most Recent Version

SEDS Operating Procedure for Packing, Marking, Labeling and Shipping of Environmental and Waste Samples, SEDSPROC-209, Most Recent Version

2 Sample and Evidence Identification

2.1 Introduction

Sample identification, chain-of-custody records, receipt for sample records, and other field records will be legibly recorded with waterproof, non-erasable ink, unless otherwise specified. If errors are made in any of these documents, corrections will be made by crossing a single line through the error and entering the correct information. All corrections must be initialed and dated. If possible, all corrections should be made by the individual making the error.

Following are definitions of terms used in this section:

Field Investigator

Any individual who performs or conducts field sampling, observation and/or measurement activities in support of field investigations

Project Leader

The individual with overall responsibility for conducting a specific field investigation in accordance with this procedure

Field Sample Custodian

Individual responsible for identifying the sample containers and maintaining custody of the samples and the Chain-of-Custody Record

Sample Team Leader

An individual designated by the project leader to be present during and responsible for all activities related to the collection of samples by a specific sampling team

Sampler

The individual responsible for the actual collection of a sample

Transferee

Any individual who receives custody of samples subsequent to release by the field sample custodian

Laboratory Sample Custodian

Individual responsible for accepting custody of samples from the field sample custodian or a transferee

One individual may fulfill more than one of the roles described above.

2.2 Sample and Evidence Identification Procedures

2.2.1 Sample Identification

The method of sample identification used depends on the type of sample collected. Field measurement samples are those collected for specific field analysis or measurement where the data are recorded directly in bound field logbooks or on the Chain-of-Custody Record. Examples of field measurements and analyses include XRF, pH, temperature, dissolved oxygen and conductivity. Samples collected for laboratory analysis will be identified by using a stick-on label or a tag which is attached to the sample container. In some cases such as biological samples, the label or tag may have to be affixed to a bag containing the sample. If a sample tag is used, the sample should be placed in a bag, then the sample and the tag will be placed in a second bag.

The following information will be included on the sample label or tag using waterproof, non-erasable ink:

- Project number;
- Field identification or sample station number;
- Date and time of sample collection;
- Designation of the sample as a grab or composite;
- Whether the sample is preserved or unpreserved;
- The general types of analyses to be performed; and
- Relevant comments (such as readily detectable or identifiable odor, color, or known toxic properties).

2.2.2 Photograph, Digital Still Image and Video Identification

Photographs and Digital Still Images

When photographs or digital images are taken for purposes of documenting and supporting a field investigation, a record of each exposure or image will be kept in a bound field logbook. The following information will be recorded in the logbook:

- An accurate description of what the photograph or image shows, including orientation, if appropriate;
- The date and time that the photograph or image was taken;

- The name of the individual who took the photograph or digital image.

When photographs are taken with a film camera, the film should be developed with the negatives supplied uncut, if possible. The identifying information that was recorded in the field logbook will be entered on the back of the prints.

When digital images are obtained during a field investigation, an electronic copy and a printed copy of the unaltered investigation-related images will be placed in the official files. For enforcement cases, it is imperative that the individual who took the image be identified in the field logbook in the event their testimony is required.

Video

When a video recording is used as evidence in an enforcement case, the following information should be recorded in a bound field logbook:

- The date and time that the video was recorded;
- A brief description of the subject of the video;
- The person recording the video.

An audio record may also be included in the video tape with the above logistical information, as well as a narrated description of the video record.

A label will be placed on the video media with the appropriate identifying information (i.e., project name, project number, date, location etc.). In the event testimony regarding a video recording is required for an enforcement case, one individual should be responsible for recording the video for each case. The original, unaltered recording will be placed in the official files.

2.2.3 Identification of Physical Evidence

Physical evidence, other than samples, will be identified, when possible, by recording the necessary information on the evidence. When samples are collected from vessels or containers which can be moved (drums for example), the vessel or container should be marked with the field identification or sample station number for future identification. The vessel or container may be labeled with an indelible marker (e.g., paint stick or spray paint). The vessel or container need not be marked if it already has a unique marking; however, these markings will be recorded in the bound field logbooks. In addition, it is suggested that photographs of any physical evidence (markings, etc.) be taken and the necessary information recorded in the field logbook.

Occasionally, it is necessary to obtain copies of recorder and/or instrument charts from facility owned analytical equipment, flow recorders, etc., during field investigations and inspections. Record the following information on copies of the charts:

- Starting and ending time(s) and date(s) for the chart;
- An instantaneous measurement of the media being measured by the recorder will be taken and entered at the appropriate location on the chart along with the date and time of the measurement; and
- A description of the location being monitored and other information required to interpret the data such as type of flow device, chart units, factors, etc.

The field investigator will indicate who the chart (or copy of the chart) was received from and enter the date and time, as well as the field investigator's initials.

Documents such as technical reports, laboratory reports, etc., should be marked with the field investigator's signature, the date, the number of pages, and from whom they were received. Documents that are claimed by a facility to be “confidential” and, therefore, potentially subject to the Confidential Business Information requirements, will be handled in accordance with SESD Operating Procedure for Control of Records (SESDPROC-002).

3 Chain-of-Custody Procedures

3.1 Introduction

Chain-of-custody procedures are comprised of the following elements: 1) maintaining custody of samples or other evidence, and 2) documentation of the chain-of-custody for evidence. To document chain-of-custody, an accurate record must be maintained to trace the possession of each sample, or other evidence, from the moment of collection to its introduction into evidence.

3.2 Sample Custody

A sample or other physical evidence is in custody if:

- It is in the actual possession of an investigator;
- It is in the view of an investigator, after being in their physical possession;
- It was in the physical possession of an investigator and then they secured it to prevent tampering; and/or
- It is placed in a designated secure area.

3.3 Documentation of Chain-of-Custody

The following are used to identify and demonstrate how sample integrity is maintained and custody is ensured.

Sample Identification

A stick-on sample label or a tag should be completed for each sample container using waterproof, non-erasable ink as specified in Section 2.2.1.

Sample Seals

If appropriate, samples should be sealed as soon as possible following collection using a custody seal with EPA identification. The sample custodian or project leader will write the date and their initials on the seal. Except for criminal investigations, the use of custody seals may be waived if field investigators keep the samples in their custody as defined in Section 3.2, from the time of collection until the samples are delivered to the laboratory analyzing the samples. Custody seals must always be used for criminal investigations.

Field Sample Custodian

The field sample custodian is the person designated by the project leader to receive and manage custody of samples while in the field, including labeling and custody sealing.

Chain-of-Custody Record

The field Chain-Of-Custody record is used to document the custody of all samples or other physical evidence collected and maintained by investigators. All physical evidence or samples will be accompanied by a Chain-Of-Custody Record. This form may be generated by the FORMS computer program (Section 5) or it may be a pre-printed multi-sheet carbonless form for hand entry of required information. The Chain-Of-Custody Record documents transfer of custody of samples from the sample custodian to another person, to the laboratory, or other organizational elements. The Chain-of-Custody Record will not be used to document the collection of split samples where there is a legal requirement to provide a receipt for samples (see Section 4, Receipt for Samples Form (CERCLA/RCRA/TSCA)). The Chain-Of-Custody Record also serves as a sample logging mechanism for the laboratory sample custodian. A separate Chain-of-Custody Record should be used for each final destination or laboratory used during the investigation.

All information necessary to fully and completely document the sample collection and required analyses must be recorded in the appropriate spaces to complete the field Chain-Of-Custody Record. Tag numbers are not required unless numbered “Criminal Tags” are used during an investigation. The following requirements apply to Chain-Of-Custody records generated by either the FORMS system or by hand entry on pre-printed forms:

- All sampling team leaders must sign in the designated signature block.
- One sample should be entered on each line and not be split among multiple lines.
- If multiple sampling teams are collecting samples, the sampling team leader's name should be clearly indicated for each sample.
- The total number of sample containers for each sample must be listed in the appropriate column. Required analyses should be entered in the appropriate location on the Chain-of-Custody Record.
- The field sample custodian, project leader or other designee, and subsequent transferee(s) should document the transfer of the samples listed on the Chain-of-Custody Record. Both the person relinquishing the samples and the person receiving them must sign the form. The date and time that this occurs should be documented in the proper space on the Chain-of-Custody Record. The exception to this requirement would be when packaged samples are shipped with a common carrier. Even though the common carrier accepts the samples for shipment, they do not sign the Chain-of-Custody Record as having received the samples.
- The last person receiving the samples or evidence will be the laboratory sample custodian or their designee(s).

The Chain-of-Custody Record is a uniquely identified document. Once the Record is completed, it becomes an accountable document and must be maintained in the project file. The suitability of any other form for chain-of-custody should be evaluated based upon its inclusion of all of the above information in a legible format.

If chain-of-custody is required for documents received during investigations, the documents should be placed in large envelopes, and the contents should be noted on the envelope. The envelope will be sealed and an EPA custody seal placed on the envelope such that it cannot be opened without breaking the seal. A Chain-Of-Custody Record will be maintained for the envelope. Any time the EPA seal is broken, that fact will be noted on the Chain-Of-Custody Record and a new seal affixed, as previously described in this section.

Physical evidence such as video tapes or other small items will be placed in an evidence bag or envelope and an EPA custody seal should be affixed so that they cannot be opened without breaking the seal. A Chain-Of-Custody Record will be maintained for these items. Any time the EPA seal is broken, that fact will be noted on the Chain-of-Custody Record and a new seal affixed.

EPA custody seals can be used to maintain custody of other items when necessary by using similar procedures as those previously outlined in this section.

Samples should not be accepted from other sources unless the sample collection procedures used are known to be acceptable, can be documented, and the sample chain-of-custody can be established. If such samples are accepted, a standard sample label containing all relevant information and the Chain-Of-Custody Record will be completed for each set of samples.

3.4 Transfer of Custody with Shipment

Transfer of custody is accomplished by the following:

- Samples will be properly packaged for shipment in accordance with the procedures outlined in SESD Operating Procedure for Packing, Marking, Labeling and Shipping of Environmental and Waste Samples (SESDPROC-209).
- All samples will be accompanied by the laboratory copy of the Chain-Of-Custody Record. If pre-printed forms are used, the white and pink sheets will be sent. If FORMs is used to generate the Chain-Of-Custody Record, the laboratory copy is identified with an "L" in the upper right corner. If multiple coolers are needed for shipment to a particular laboratory, the laboratory copy of the Chain-Of-Custody Record for the entire shipment is placed in a sealed plastic bag in one of the coolers. When shipping samples via common carrier, the "Relinquished By" box should be filled in; however, the "Received By" box should be left blank. The laboratory sample custodian is responsible for receiving custody of the samples and will fill in the "Received By" section of the Chain-of-Custody Record. One

copy of the Record will be provided to and retained by the project leader. After samples have been received and accepted by the laboratory, a copy of the Chain-of-Custody Record, with ASB sample identification numbers, will be transmitted to the project leader. This copy will become a part of the project file.

- If sent by mail, the package will be registered with return receipt requested. If sent by common carrier, an Air Bill should be used. Receipts from post offices and Air Bills will be retained as part of the documentation of the chain-of-custody. The Air Bill number or registered mail serial number will be recorded in the remarks section of the Chain-Of-Custody Record.

4 Receipt for Samples Form (CERCLA/RCRA/TSCA)

4.1 Introduction

Section 3007 of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) of 1976 and Section 104 of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA or Superfund) of 1980 require that a "receipt" for all facility samples collected during inspections and investigations be given to the owner/operator of each facility before the field investigator departs the premises. The Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) contains similar provisions. The laws do not require that homeowners or other off-site property owners be given this form.

4.2 Receipt for Samples Form

A Receipt for Samples form, using either the pre-printed form or one generated by the FORMS system, is to be used to satisfy the receipt for samples provisions of RCRA, CERCLA, and TSCA. The form also documents that split samples were offered and either "Received" or "Declined" by the owner/operator of the facility or site being investigated (if a sample is split with a facility, state regulatory agency, or other party representative, the recipient should be provided (if enough sample is available) with an equal weight or volume of sample). All information must be supplied in the indicated spaces to complete the Receipt for Samples form.

- The sampler(s) must sign the form in the indicated location
- Each sample collected from the facility or site must be documented in the sample record portion of the form. The sample station number, date and time of sample collection, composite or grab sample designation, whether or not split samples were collected (yes or no should be entered under the split sample column), a brief description of each sampling location, and the total number of sample containers for each sample must be entered.
- The bottom of the form is used to document the site operator's acceptance or rejection of split samples. The project leader must sign and complete the information in the "Split Samples Transferred By" section (date and time must be entered). If split samples were not collected, the project leader should initial and place a single line through "Split Samples Transferred By" in this section. The operator of the site must indicate whether split samples were received or declined and sign the form. The operator must give their title, telephone number, and the date and time they signed the form. If the operator refuses to sign the form, the sampler(s) should note this fact in the operator's signature block and initial this entry.

The Receipt for Samples form is an accountable document after it is completed. A copy of the form is to be given to the facility or site owner/operator. The original form must be maintained in the project files.

5 FORMS

The container labels and the Chain-of-Custody record should be generated using the FORMS computer program, a computer program designed to streamline the documentation required by SESD and/or the Contract Laboratory Program (CLP) for sample identification and chain-of-custody. When possible, FORMS should be used during all field investigations. Once the appropriate information is entered into the computer, FORMS will generate stick-on labels for the sample containers and will generate sample receipt forms and chain-of-custody records for the appropriate laboratory. The advantages to this system include faster processing of samples and increased accuracy. Accuracy is increased because the information is entered only once, and consequently, consistent for the bottle labels, sample receipt forms and chain-of-custody records. Operating instructions are available for use with the FORMS program.